

## Changing Football Ideology Through Place

### Abstract

Organizations and organizational places can be important entities that help legitimize and operationalize localised behaviours that have systemic global consequences (Low and Davenport, 2009; Samuel Peattie and Harman, 2020). Interactions in these ‘container spaces’ (Amin, 2004) offer people and the place itself an ability to construct an identity based on how they see themselves and how others see them (Ley, 1981; Creswell, 2004). Place is socially significant (Eyles, 1985) and one’s sense of place is nostalgic and topophilic (Tuan, 1974) and often constructed around concrete or abstract objects (Perkins and Thorns, 2012). There is also an emerging body of work in the Macromarketing literature linking meso level topographies and the socio- spatial interactions they encourage an an attempt to solve macro level social, economic, and environmental “wicked problems” (Kennedy 2016; Samuel et al 2021).

From the deeply personal place of home to the working places of private and public organizations, and the social places of parks, public houses and coffee shops (Oldenburg, 1999), the social-spatial interactions that play out within their confines help us develop a senses of place, of ourselves and of others (Perkins and Thorns, 2012; Creswell, 2004; Glennie and Thrift, 1992; Tuan, 1977; Harvey, 1973). It is the deep interconnections that exist between personal, work and public spaces that enable the transference of practices and habits between these different social spheres (Seyfang, 2005). Massey (1994) likens these everyday places to a ‘porous network of social relations’ where social practices open up spaces to create places that can shape practices. As Creswell (2004: 39) states “Place provides the conditions of possibility for social practice.”

Urban places, such as sporting grounds, have a particularly influential historical role in shaping social practices (Barnett, Cloke, Clarke and Malpass, 2011; Amin, 2004; Mansvelt, 2005; Glennie and Thrift, 1992, Samuel Peattie and Herman, 2020). For example, the professional football clubs of St. Pauli (Germany) and Cosenza (Italy) have both developed places that socially support marginalised people such as refugees, people from impoverished communities in Africa and those from the LGBT community (Jones, 2019; Vinas and Parra, 2017). These clubs, and lower league clubs such as Forest Green Rovers (FGR) in the UK, have strong sustainability agenda, and promote activist and environmentalist groups (Vince, 2020; Vinas and Parra, 2017). Thus, we suggest understanding these novel places offers a potential to empirically augment macromarketing's contribution to areas such as quality of life, place management, understanding crowds, advancing sustainability practices in organisations and educating new audiences in social and environmental justice.

Globalisation has marked a major paradigm shift in place understanding and function, and has unquestionably had a significant impact on our social actions and interactions. The global society that ensued has fundamentally changed the relationship between the individual and the place they interact within (Harvey, 2000; Massey, 2005). It has redefined our senses of place and self, and extended our potential beyond the local (Amin, 2004). As a result, place is no longer always locally-bound but instead emphasises global attachment, identity and responsibility (Massey, 2005). This is reflected in the growth of new global social movements and transnational advocacy networks that increasingly provide an alternative participation mechanism for activists (Peattie and Samuel, 2018). The key drivers for the creation and evolution of 'places' have not substantially changed but instead have evolved to embrace the global as "the local place becomes one potential arena for action to change the global" (Massey, 2007: 184).

This paper explores how the nature of a sporting place has been shaped to change the practice of football as a sport, as a business and as entertainment. After an extended period of immersion in the everyday practices of the Worlds Greenest Football Club FGR (Euractiv 2019), it draws upon several rich veins of data to construct a narrative of the transformational journey of the organization, its staff, players and fans. Through this examination, we uncover how the club differentiates itself from the historical and socio-economic roots of football and utilises numerous novel macromarketing /sustainability initiatives to reimagining a new type of responsible football.

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